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CEREBUS

GOING HOME

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DEC

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CEREBUS

NO. 249 DECEMBER 1999

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GOING HOME

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BOOK ONE
Sudden Moves
(Cerebus 232 to 239)

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BOOK TWO
Fall and the River
(Cerebus 240 to 250)

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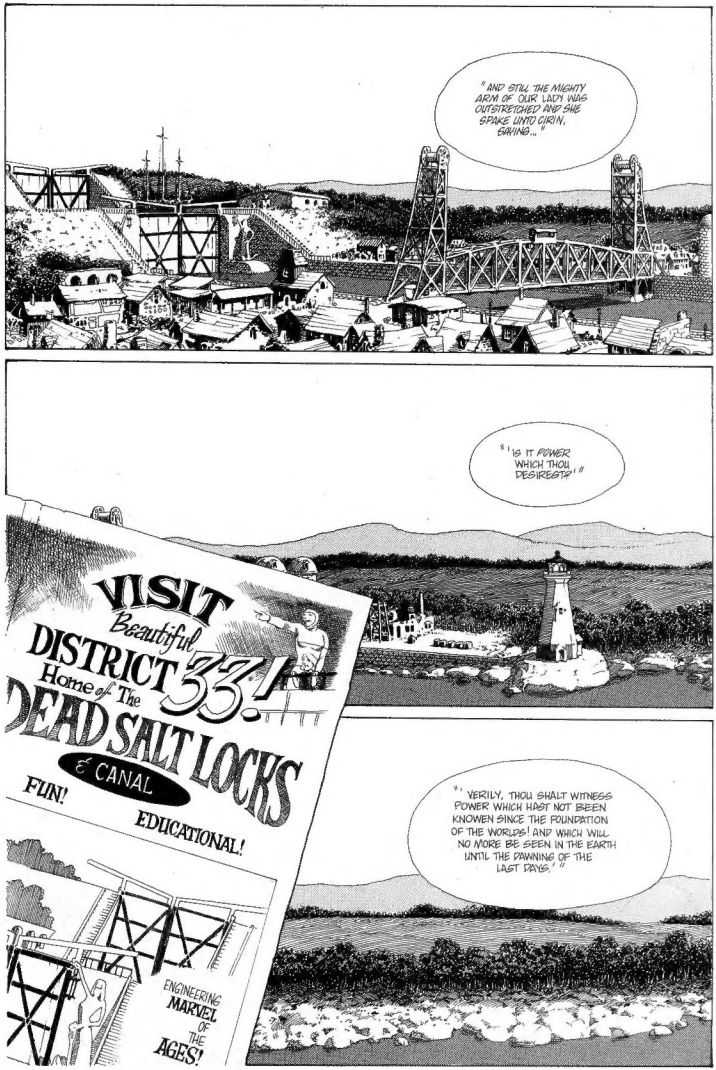
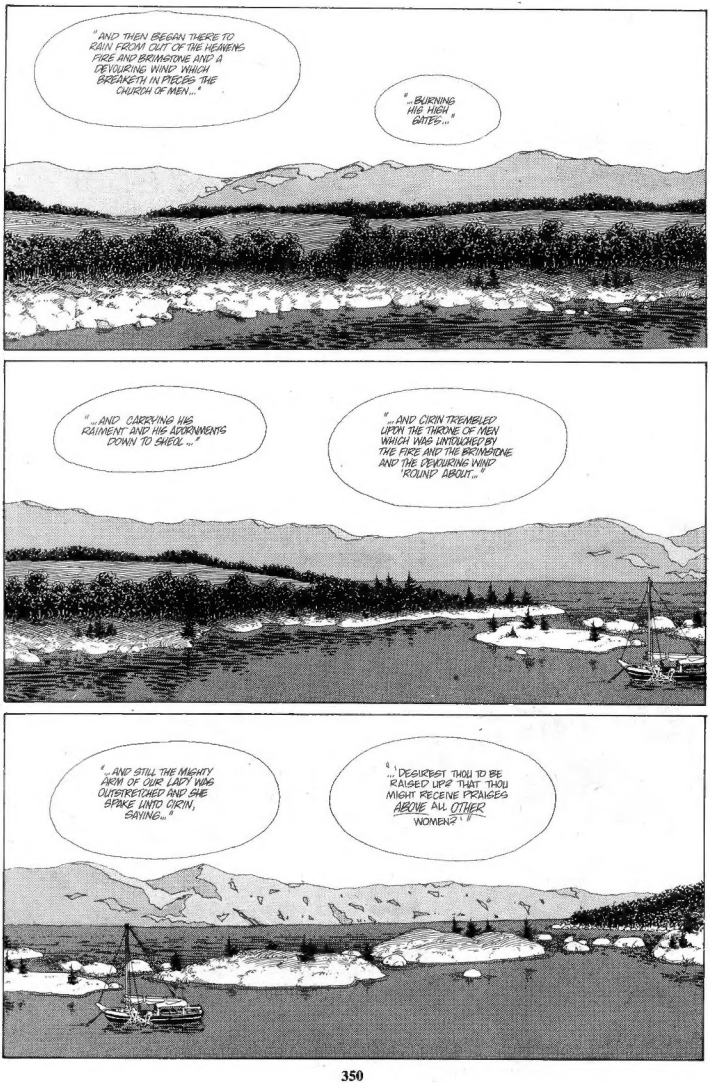
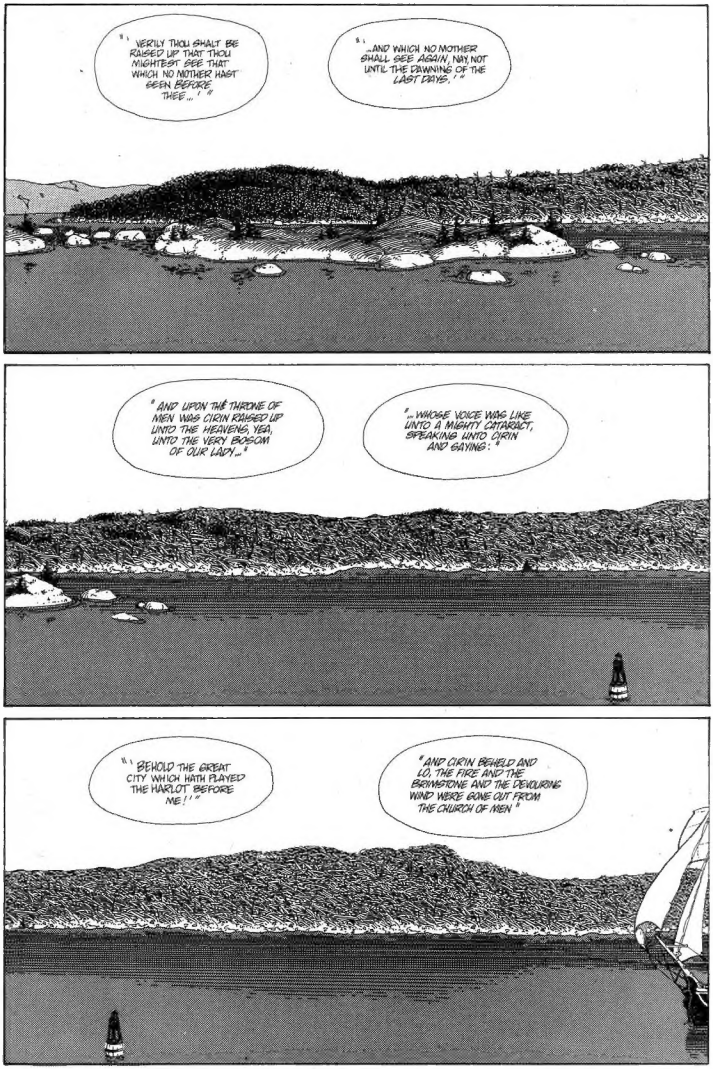
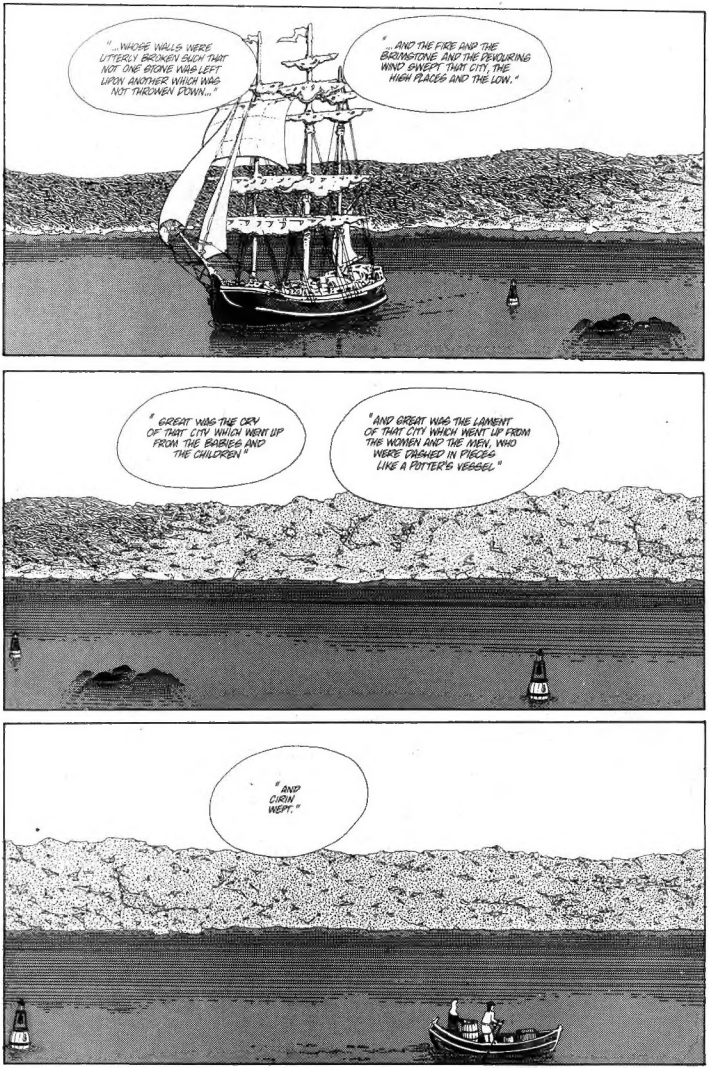
Drifting
towards some
ignoble destiny
they could not
evade.

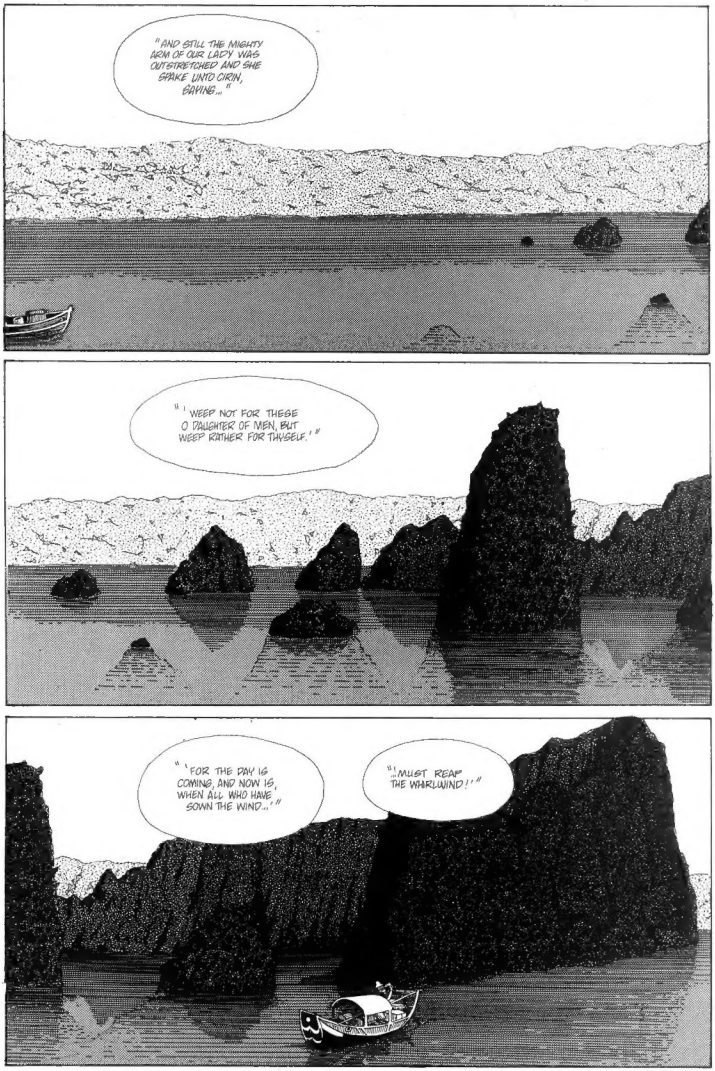
If you're
strong enough
there *are* no
precedents.

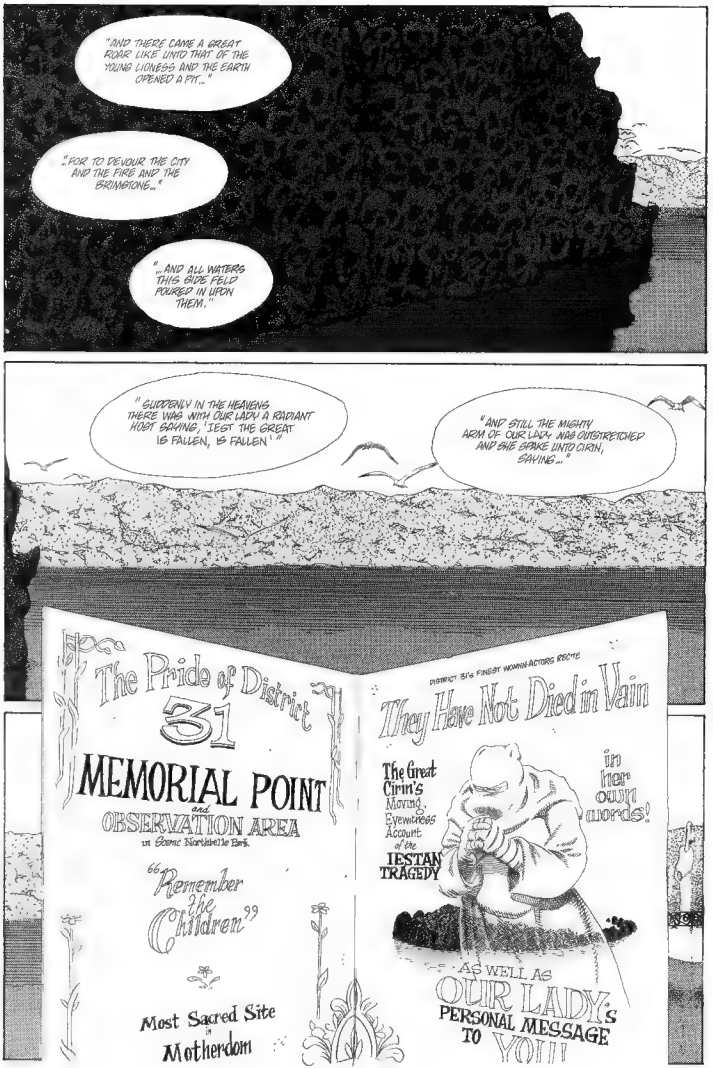

"AND STILL THE MIGHTY ARM OF OUR LADY WAS OUTSTRETCHED AND SHE SPAKE UNTO CIRIN, SAYING..."
"'IS IT POWER WHICH THOU DESIREST?'"
VISIT Beautiful DISTRICT 33! Home of The DEAD SALT LOCKS & CANAL
FUN!
EDUCATIONAL!
ENGINEERING MARVEL OF THE AGES!
"'VERILY, THOU SHALT WITNESS POWER WHICH HAST NOT BEEN KNOWEN SINCE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLDS! AND WHICH WILL NO MORE BE SEEN IN THE EARTH UNTIL THE DAWNING OF THE LAST DAYS.'"

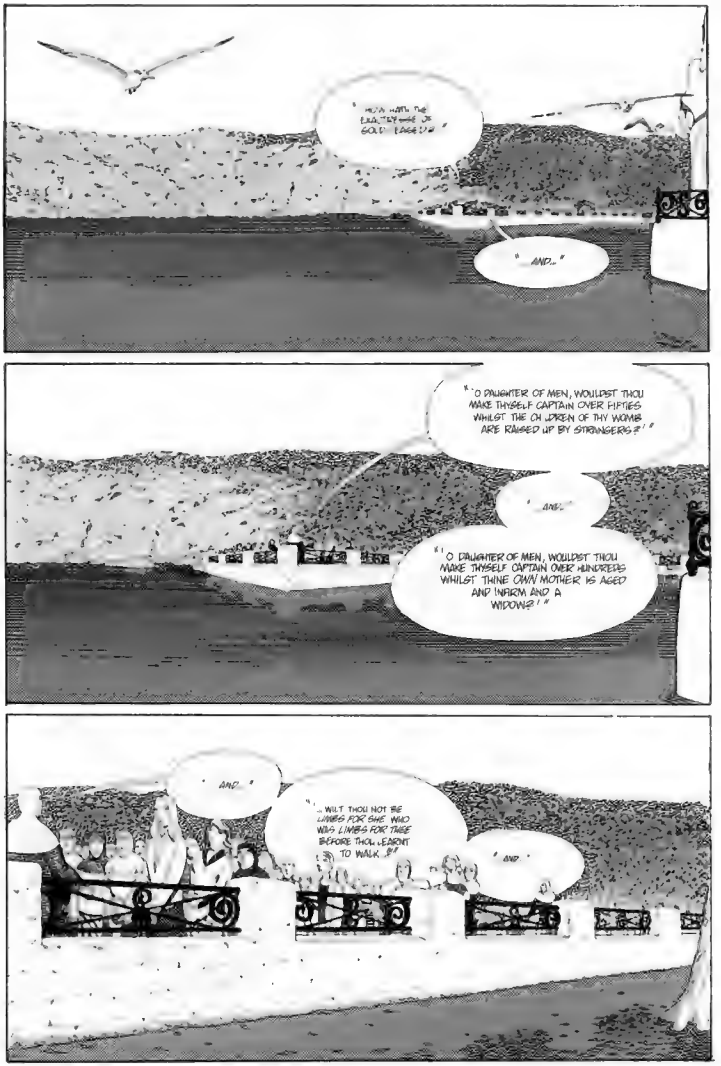

"AND THEN BEGAN THERE TO RAIN FROM OUT OF THE HEAVENS FIRE AND BRIMSTONE AND A DEVOURING WIND WHICH BREAKETH IN PIECES THE CHURCH OF MEN..."
"...BURNING HIS HIGH GATES..."
"...AND CARRYING HIS RAIMENT AND HIS ADORNMENTS DOWN TO SHEOL..."
"...AND CIRIN TREMBLED UPON THE THRONE OF MEN WHICH WAS UNTOUCHED BY THE FIRE AND THE BRIMSTONE AND THE DEVOURING WIND 'ROUND ABOUT..."
"...AND STILL THE MIGHTY ARM OF OUR LADY WAS OUTSTRETCHED AND SHE SPAKE UNTO CIRIN, SAYING..."
"...DESIREST THOU TO BE RAISED UP? THAT THOU MIGHT RECEIVE PRAISES ABOVE ALL OTHER WOMEN?"

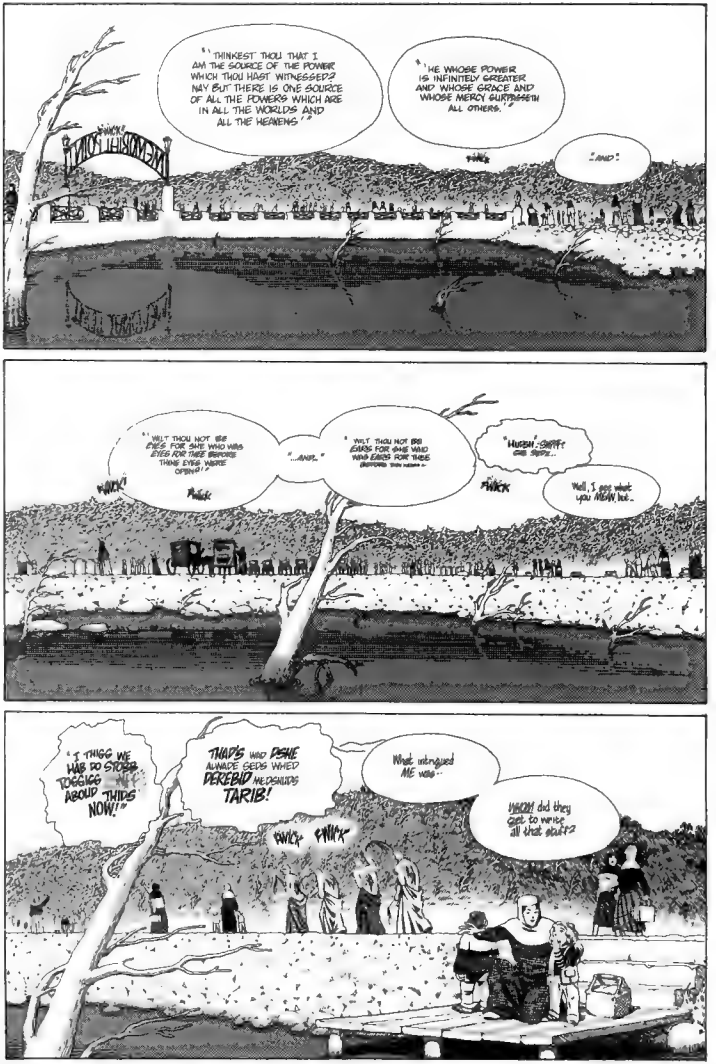

"VERILY THOU SHALT BE RAISED UP THAT THOU MIGHTEST SEE THAT WHICH NO MOTHER HAST BEEN BEFORE THEE..."
"...AND WHICH NO MOTHER SHALL SEE AGAIN, NAY, NOT UNTIL THE DAWNING OF THE LAST DAYS."
"AND UPON THE THRONE OF MEN WAS CIRIN RAISED UP UNTO THE HEAVENS, YEA, UNTO THE VERY BOSOM OF OUR LADY..."
"...WHOSE VOICE WAS LIKE UNTO A MIGHTY CATARACT, SPEAKING UNTO CIRIN AND SAYING:"
"BEHOLD THE GREAT CITY WHICH HATH PLAYED THE HARLOT BEFORE ME!"
"AND CIRIN BEHELD AND LO, THE FIRE AND THE BRIMSTONE AND THE DEVOURING WIND WERE GONE OUT FROM THE CHURCH OF MEN"


"...WHOSE WALLS WERE UTTERLY BROKEN SUCH THAT NOT ONE STONE WAS LEFT UPON ANOTHER WHICH WAS NOT THROWEN DOWN..."
"...AND THE FIRE AND THE BRIMSTONE AND THE DEVOURING WIND SWEPT THAT CITY, THE HIGH PLACES AND THE LOW."
"GREAT WAS THE CRY OF THAT CITY WHICH WENT UP FROM THE BABIES AND THE CHILDREN"
"AND GREAT WAS THE LAMENT OF THAT CITY WHICH WENT UP FROM THE WOMEN AND THE MEN, WHO WERE DASHED IN PIECES LIKE A POTTER'S VESSEL"
"AND CIRIN WEPT."

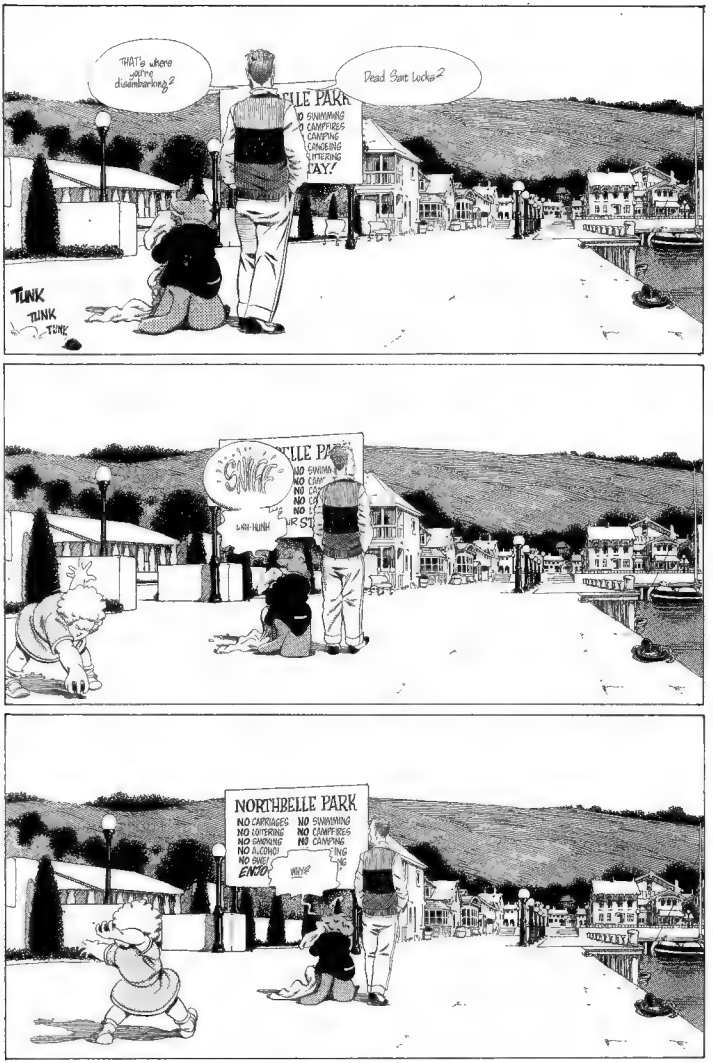

"AND STILL THE MIGHTY ARM OF OUR LADY WAS OUTSTRETCHED AND SHE SPAKE UNTO CHRN, SAYING..."
"'WEEP NOT FOR THESE O DAUGHTER OF MEN, BUT WEEP RATHER FOR THYSELF.'"
"'FOR THE DAY IS COMING, AND NOW IS, WHEN ALL WHO HAVE SOWN THE WIND...'"
"...MUST REAP THE WHIRLWIND!'"

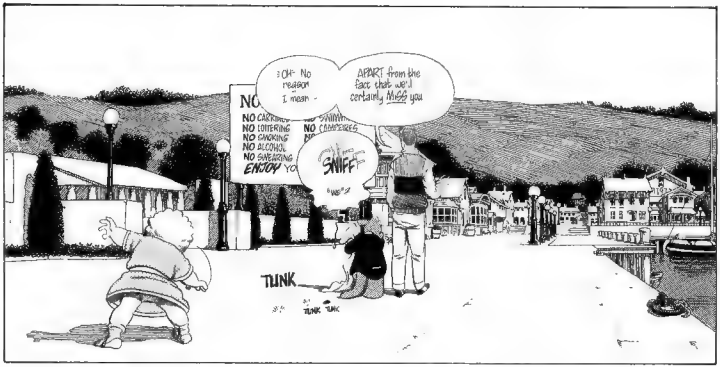

"AND THERE CAME A GREAT ROAR LIKE UNTO THAT OF THE YOUNG LIONESS AND THE EARTH OPENED A PIT..."
"FOR TO DEVOUR THE CITY AND THE FIRE AND THE BRIMSTONE..."
"...AND ALL WATERS THIS SIDE FELL POURED IN UPON THEM."
"SUDDENLY IN THE HEAVENS THERE WAS WITH OUR LADY A RADIANT HOST SAYING, 'IEST THE GREAT IS FALLEN, IS FALLEN.'"
"AND STILL THE MIGHTY ARM OF OUR LADY WAS OUTSTRETCHED AND SHE SPAKE UNTO CIRIN, SAYING..."
The Pride of District 31
MEMORIAL POINT
and
OBSERVATION AREA
in Scenic Northside Park
"Remember the Children"
Most Sacred Site in Motherdom
DISTRICT 31's FINEST WOMEN ACTORS RECITE
They Have Not Died in Vain
in her own words!
The Great Cirin's Moving Eyewitness Account of the IESTAN TRAGEDY
AS WELL AS
OUR LADY's PERSONAL MESSAGE TO YOU!

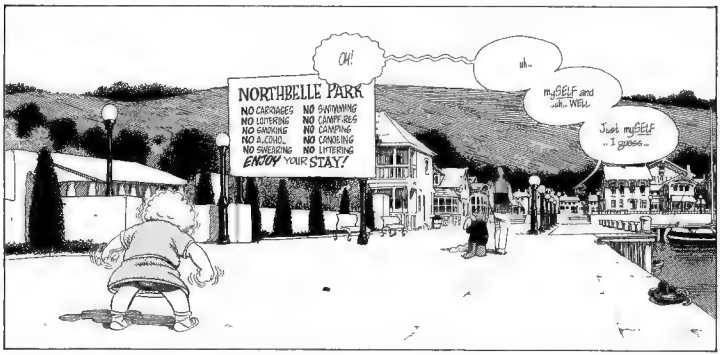

" HOW HATH THE EXACTITUDE OF GOLD LESSENED!"
" AND..."
" O DAUGHTER OF MEN, WOULDST THOU MAKE THYSELF CAPTAIN OVER FIFTIES WHILST THE CHILDREN OF THY WOMB ARE RAISED UP BY STRANGERS?"
" AND..."
" O DAUGHTER OF MEN, WOULDST THOU MAKE THYSELF CAPTAIN OVER HUNDREDS WHILST THINE OWN MOTHER IS AGED AND INFIRM AND A WIDOW?"
" AND..."
" ... WILT THOU NOT BE LIMBS FOR SHE WHO WAS LIMBS FOR THEE BEFORE THOU LEARNT TO WALK..?"
" AND..."


"THINKEST THOU THAT I AM THE SOURCE OF THE POWER WHICH THOU HAST WITNESSED? NAY BUT THERE IS ONE SOURCE OF ALL THE POWERS WHICH ARE IN ALL THE WORLDS AND ALL THE HEAVENS."
"HE WHOSE POWER IS INFINITELY GREATER AND WHOSE GRACE AND WHOSE MERCY SURPASSETH ALL OTHERS."
THWICK
"AND!"
"WILT THOU NOT SEE EYES FOR SHE WHO WAS EYES FOR THEE BEFORE THINE EYES WERE OPENED?"
"...AND..."
"NAY, THOU NOT SEE EYES FOR SHE WHO WAS EYES FOR THEE BEFORE THIS NATION."
"HUSSH! SHUTT! GEE SHUTT..."
Well, I see what you MEAN, kid...
"I THINGG WE HAS DO SOMEB TOOGICG ABOUD THIDS NOW!"
THADS WHO DESHE ALWAGE SEEDS WHED DEREBAD MEDSHIDS TARIB!
What intrigued ME was...
WHOM did they get to write all that stuff?

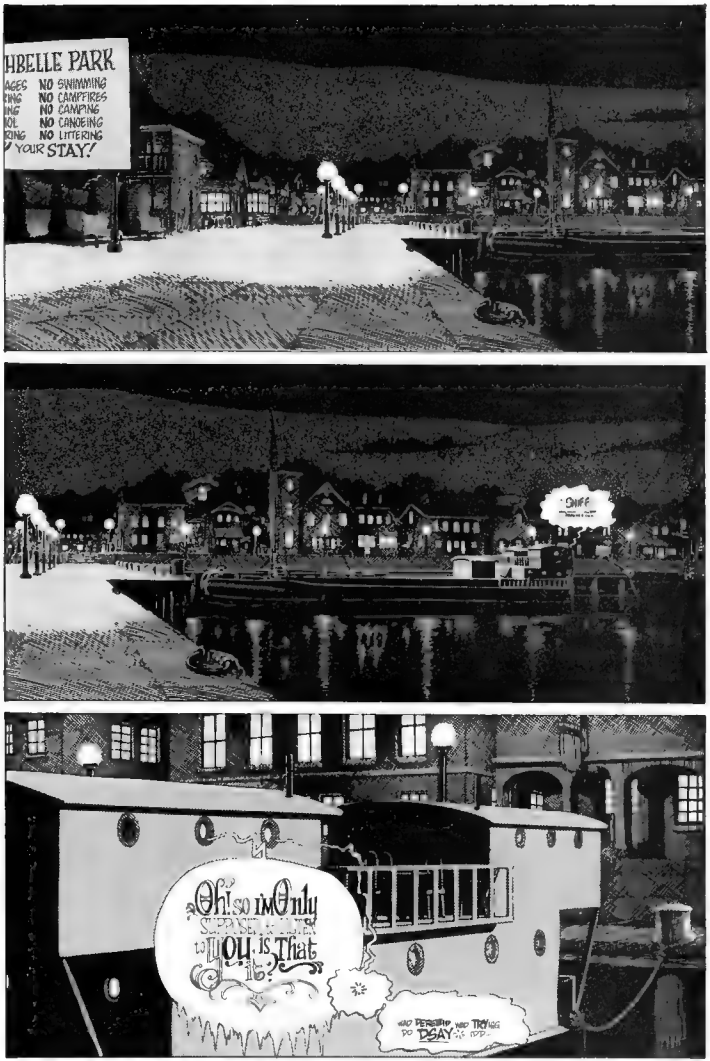
BUDD! DISHED RIGHD THERE DO THAD PLACE OB.
SNIFF STADD ADD LEGEDD
OB
COW COOGIES!
On the ONE hand it sounds like Anders Sherwoodsen, but on the OTHER hand it could be Hans DOING Anders Sherwoodsen
PANCK
PANCK
Uh, know
Wuh, "Torrents of Spring" Hatchet job?
COW? COOKIES?
WELL DEREBID ID DUST GOIGS DO HABB DO "LAY DOWD PA LAW"
SNAP SNAP SNAP
AD DSAY:
(WHE? WE GED OBB DA BARDSE AD DED SALDT LOGGS)
"JAGKA?
UB NORDTH DEY DO'T TAGE KIDELY DO GODDEDSS GRAB."
...er

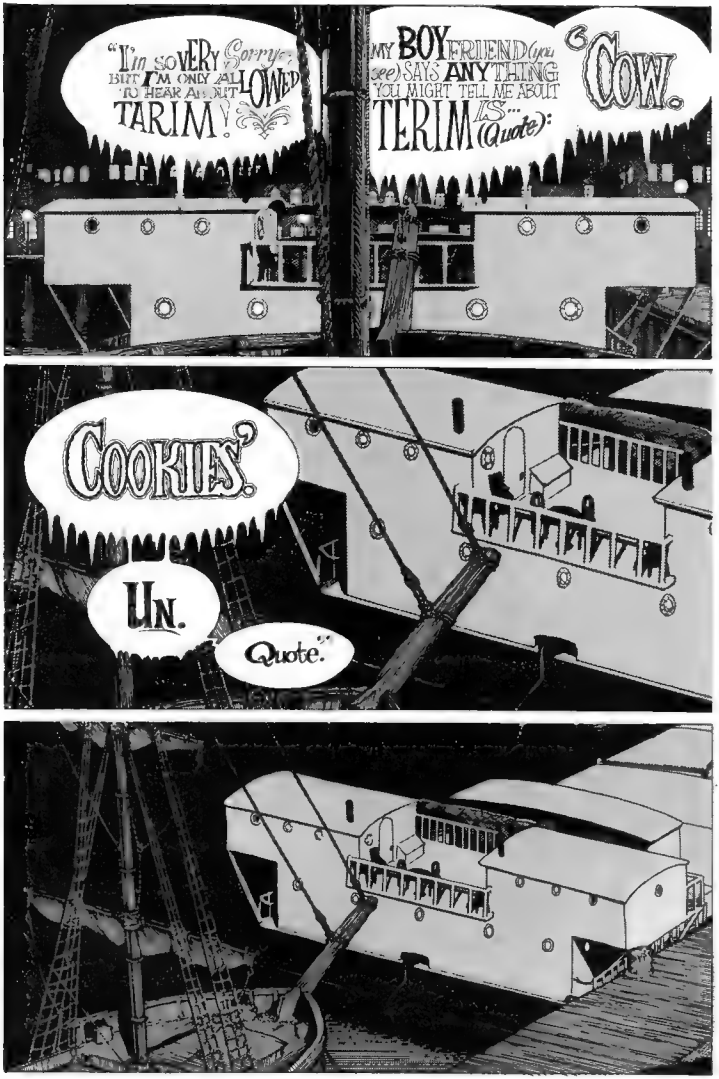

THAT's where we're disembarking?
Dead Sea Locks?
TLINK
TLINK
TLINK
SNIFF
NORTHBELLE PARK
NO CARRIAGES
NO LOITERING
NO SMOKING
NO ALCOHOL
NO SWEARING
ENJOY
NO SWIMMING
NO CAMPFIRES
NO CAMPING
WHY?

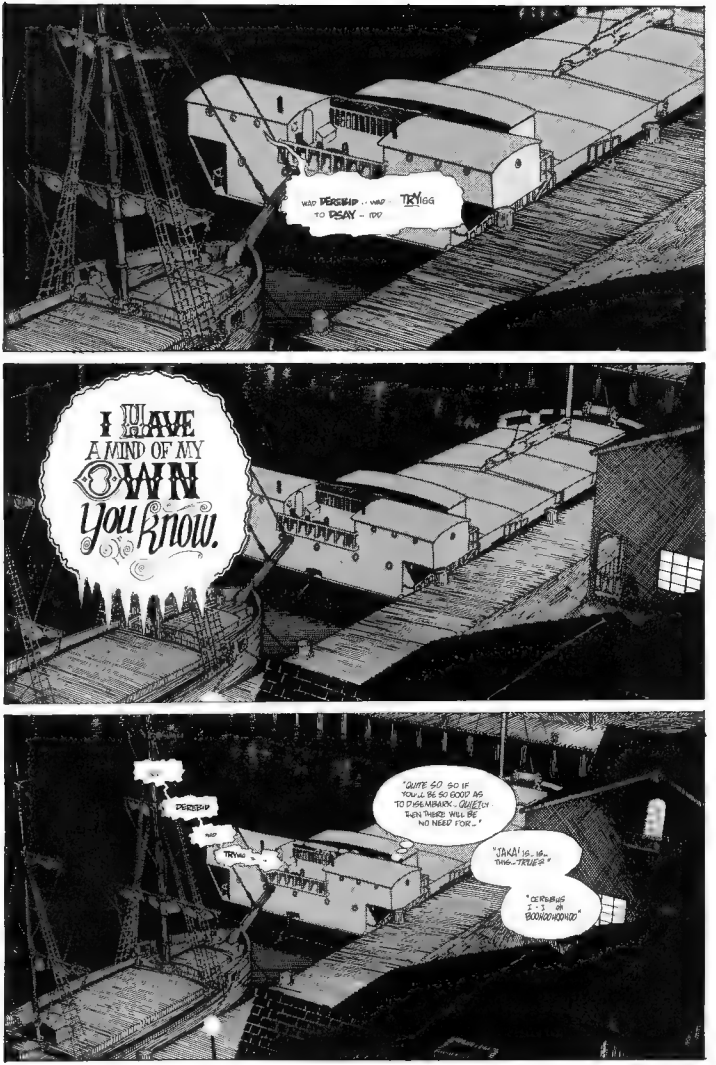

OH! No reason I mean -
APART from the fact that we'll certainly MISS you
NO CARRIAGES
NO LOITERING
NO SMOKING
NO ALCOHOL
NO SWEARING
ENJOY YO
NO SWIMMING
NO CAMPFIRES
SNIFF
TUNK
TUNK TUNK

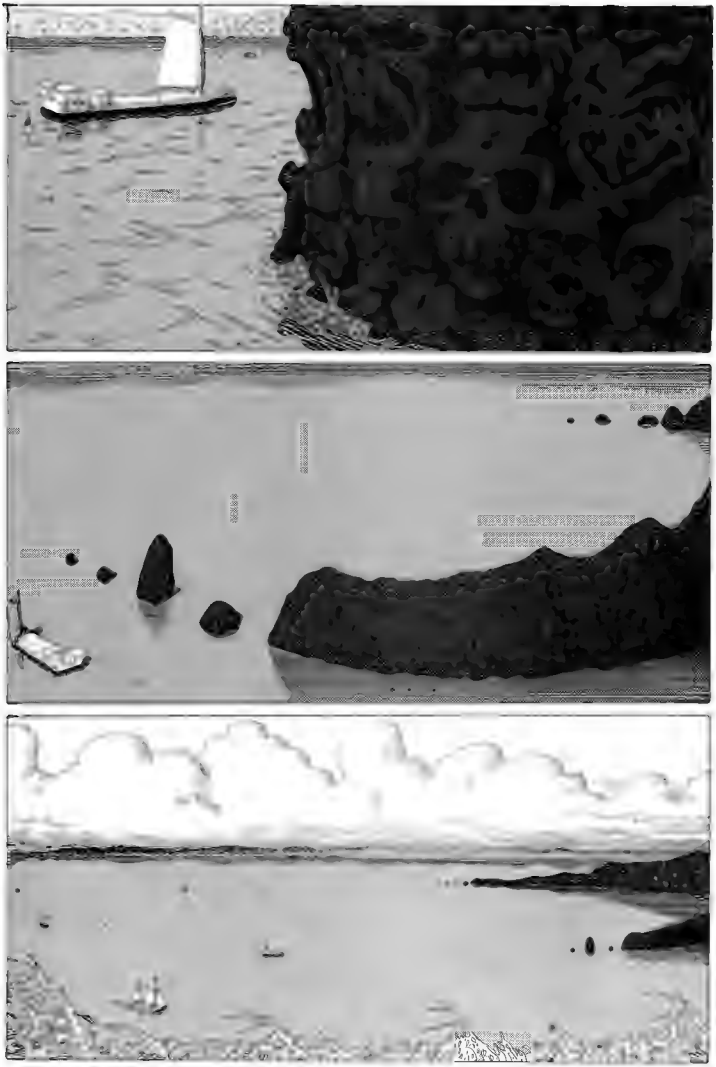

OH!
NORTHBELLE PARK
NO CARRIAGES
NO LOITERING
NO SMOKING
NO ALCOHOL
NO SWEARING
ENJOY YOUR STAY!
NO SWIMMING
NO CAMPFIRES
NO CAMPING
NO CANOEING
NO LITTERING
uh...
mySELF and uh... WELL
Just mySELF ...I guess...

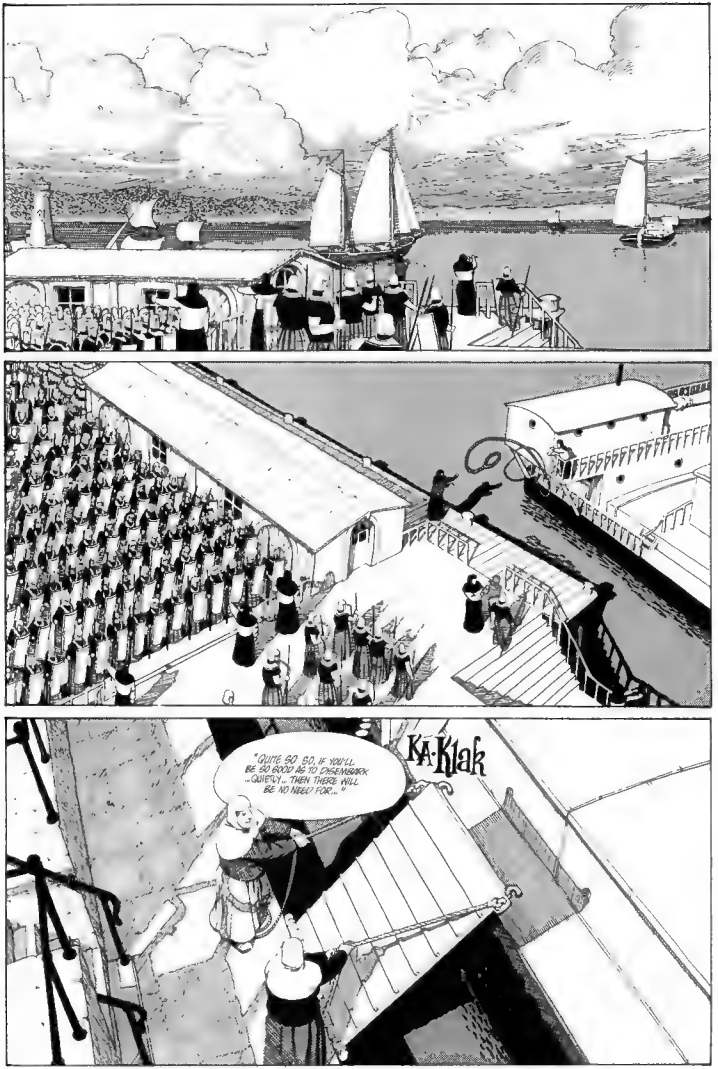
WELL
?
NORTHBELLE PARK
NO CARRIAGES
NO LOITERING
NO SMOKING
NO ALCOHOL
NO SWEARING
ENJOY YOUR STAY!
NO SWIMMING
NO CAMPFIRES
NO CAMPING
NO CANOEING
NO LITTERING
JASKA ADD DEREBID: SNIFFE will DERDERLY MISS YOU
SNIFFE
DOO.


HBELLE PARK
AGES NO SWIMMING
NG NO CAMPFIRES
NG NO CAMPING
OL NO CANOEING
RING NO LITTERING
YOUR STAY!
OH!!
Oh! so im Only
to You is That
ME?
AND PERHAPS AND TRY NOT
TO PSAY


"I'm so very sorry, but I'm only allowed to hear about Tarim!"
My boyfriend (you see) says anything you might tell me about Terim is... (quote):
"Cow."
"Cookies."
Un.
Quote."


WAS PERSHIP .. WAS TRYIGG
TO PSAY – TOO
I HAVE A MIND OF MY OWN You know.
"QUITE SO . SO IF YOU'LL BE SO GOOD AS TO DISEMBARK . QUIETH . THEN THERE WILL BE NO NEED FOR –"
"JAKA! IS . IS . THIS – TRUE?"
"GERSHUS I – I – oh BOOHOOHOOHOO"




"QUITE SO, SO. IF YOU'LL BE SO KIND AS TO DISEMBARK ...QUIETLY... THEN THERE WILL BE NO NEED FOR..."
KA-KLAK

Well!
Dead Stop
er
Dead Salt Locks at LAST eh?
Sniff
UNH-HUH
'Trouble'?
How do you MEAN?
LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE EGGBEGGTIGG DRUBBUL
THERE'S BUDST OF ALBORST A DUZZEN CHRISTMUST TREEZERS ODD DA POCK
Sniff
ARE'D DOO DA DEETH.

CHASING SCOTT

continued from last issue

"Full Script": the way almost every comic book was done prior to 1960-something. The writer typed out page-by-page, panel-by-panel descriptions ("Page one, panel one:"), described what was to be depicted in the panel ("JAKA exiting the stateroom. Early evening. She is dressed casually."), the contents of any captions ("CAPTION: It is nighttime on the barge..."), word balloons ("JAKA: I'll be out*side*."), thought balloons ["JAKA (thinking):...What a jerk "] and/or sound effects ("SFX: Ka-klak").

The "Marvel Method": Pioneered by Stan Lee when he was editor-in-chief of Marvel Comics in the 1960s and everything he touched—starting with the *Fantastic Four* in 1961—turned to gold, with the result that he was soon writing a lot of titles and creating new ones, all of which were (in comic-book terms) wildly successful. Logistically, the typing *alone* became too much for one man, and, resourcefully, Stan Lee innovated a method by which he would give artists a very rough outline of the stories they were to draw—as little as a paragraph—and the artist would essentially lay out and pencil the entire twenty-something page installment. Stan would write in the word balloons and the captions, which would then be lettered in by the letterer.

Insane? You bet.

But only in the *Real* World where "How successful and busy was he? Why, he was SO successful and SO busy that he had his artists draw the stories first and (rim shot) HE WROTE 'EM AFTERWARDS!" sounds like the punch line to a joke. In the *comic-book* world it is the subject of hair-splitting analysis and debate that would put Talmudic scholars to shame (How much credit does Rabbi Stan deserve for the stories? According to Rabbi Mark who studied under Rabbi Stan's greatest collaborator, Rabbi Jack...).

Insane, *but*...in both the Real World and the comic-book world, the comic books produced under the "Marvel method" *continued* to be wildly successful...in *Real* World terms, the whole line remained *financially* successful: in *comic-book* world terms the books were (and still are) universally hailed as classics, "classics," or Classics. Thus, a consensus emerged that commercially successful, critically acclaimed comic books not only *can* be written after they are drawn—they *should* be.

Unless I'm misreading him (always a possibility), one of the points of Evanier's columns seemed to be: not everyone is Stan Lee. If best-selling, classic, "classic," or Classic comic-book stories *can* be accomplished using the "Marvel method," it does not *implicitly follow* that the "Marvel method" *necessarily* produces best-selling, classic, "classic," or Classic comic-book stories [sales being now, you should pardon the expression, "in the toilet" and a new (*possibly-but-not-definitely-but-shall-we-perhaps-agree-on-more-likely-than-not*) consensus begins to emerge as (*as-some-might-see-it*) the comic-book "industry" is dragged (*perhaps-kicking-and-screaming-is-a-little-harsh-perhaps-not*) to the (*conclusion-or-at-least-the-suggestion*) that since the retirement of Stan Lee from active scriptwriting (*much-perhaps-most-certainly-not-all-and-all-exceptions-duly-noted-perhaps-we-can-agree-upon-an-undefined-word-between-much-and-most*) of the work produced under the "Marvel method" (*in-the-last-two-decades-give-or-take-a-year*) is, you should also pardon the expression, "shit" and that, *further*, these two states of existence, "in the toilet" and "shit," might perhaps share some hitherto unperceived thematic link which...]

Before you all stampede to the bar for a double scotch: End of brief descriptions.

I, SCRIPTER

My own first efforts to break into the comic-book field were as a writer—or as it is more commonly known in the "industry," a scripter. After several years of effort, I sold four scripts (one to Skywald Publishing, "Cry of the White Wolf," published in the last issue of *Psycho*, one to Warren Publishing, "Shadow of the Axe" in *Creepy* No....79?...and two to Star*Reach Publishing: "I'm God" and "Anticipation" in *I Forget* No. something and *I Don't Remember* No. something else).

What came back to me in a hurry is how stultifying the act of scripting a comic book is. On the one hand, you're trying to maintain a level of creative interest and enthusiasm and on the other you are engaged in something that is about as creative as barking out latitude and longitude co-ordinates in front of a radar screen, the two conditions alternating in a way that does not lend itself to sustained, inwardly focused "method" acting:

> BILL: Act one, scene two, approximately three minutes in. I'm standing next to the dining room table, distractedly picking up pieces of wax fruit and putting them back down again. Yvette is behind me. Bill colon I thought things were getting better.
>
> YVETTE: Act one, scene two, approximately three minutes and five seconds in. I am turned partly away from Bill relative to my position in the last panel, my face in shadow. I have raised my hand so it is shielding my eyes. Yvette colon They were dot dot dot Yvette colon dot dot dot for a time.

For that reason, I always used to (and I suspect it's rather common among scriptwriters) write the dialogue

separately in a notebook or on a loose sheet of paper—without the "page 2, panel 3" and art directions—reading it to myself to check for consistency, conversational rhythms, pacing, internal logic, mood, emotion, etc., etc. and adding all the technical accoutrements in the typing stage.

This time out, I had the decided advantage that I didn't really have a "producer" to worry about. In fact, no one—apart from Gerhard—was ever going to *see* the script, let alone reject it or send it back for revision. I set myself a goal of ten pages a day—a higher-than-average quota for scriptwriting (from what I remembered), however (I reasoned) I already knew two-thirds to five-sixths of the content. If I met my goal, I would be done in six days.

It was rough going—as I said, stultifying. I ended up cracking stupid jokes in the art directions, making fun of my own typos and whatnot. Far closer to the forefront of my awareness than was creatively healthy (in my view) was how far along I was. I remembered that from the "old days" as well. Page five of issue 249—35 pages to go. Page seven of issue 249—33 pages to go. By "days five and six" I spent an unconscionable amount of the day riffling through the finished pages. Not reading them or even skimming them—just flipping through them, weighing them in one hand, pinching the stack of pages between my thumbs and forefingers. Handing them to myself ("Here's the script!"). Handing them back ("Where's the rest of it?").

Part of it, I think, is that one script looks pretty much like another. At the end of a week of drawing—pencilling, inking, and lettering—I'll have four, five, or six pages on my wall, each page different from the others produced that week, last month, and the month before that. At any greater distance than a foot or so, there is no way to tell the script pages for pages 334 and 335 from the script pages for pages 349 and 350. It was only the size of the stack of pages and the number of pages that remained to be done that gave me any awareness of progress.

I even succumbed to the "pointless distraction syndrome"—the self-destructive part of any writer that embarks on any (I mean, ANY) time-consuming, useless enterprise rather than stick with the project at hand. One of the days became almost a complete washout (three pages instead of ten) because I suddenly took it into my head that some benefit would accrue from reducing all of the script pages onto half-sized photocopies, spraying the backs with spray adhesive, and pasting them into my notebook, two to a page. As near as I can reconstruct it, I thought that I could keep a diary of some sort in the space left over while I was drawing the pages, documenting where and why, as an artist, I had chosen to deviate from the art descriptions.

So, seven days instead of six days later I had the finished script. I finished "Chasing Scott's" latest installment, answered all the mail, cleaned up the studio, handed the script over to the "Director," and…

I, ARTIST

Being an all-Cerebus, all close-ups page, page 329 posed no great difficulty (the "writer" part of me was a little disappointed that I didn't jot down all my creative decisions into the space left on the notebook page where "he" had pasted in the little reduction of the script page). The next day I went on to page 330. Early on in the scriptwriting phase, the "writer" had obviously tried to write the art direction as if it were the start of a…not particularly *good*…*Saturday Evening Post* story:

(CAMERA pans in or trucks in or dollies in or whatever it is that CAMERAS do, closing in on CEREBUS'S left shoulder. Just over his left shoulder, JAKA is visible, standing uncertainly at the top of the stairs which lead down to the CIRINISTS' quarters. It's hard to show uncertainty in silhouette, so let's do it with a vague uncertainty of the positioning of the hands, both on one side, holding the chain "handrail" and the fact that she takes only one step down the stairs over the course of the three panel pan/truck and/or dolly.)

Make that a particularly *bad Saturday Evening Post* story.

So I went into Ger's studio and got the model of the barge that he had built and mounted on a camera tripod (so we would have "Look Ma, no hands" reference next to the drawing boards when either of us needed it for checking the "camera angles"). I set it up next to my drawing board, tilting it so I could squint directly along the line of sight in the art description.

The Cirinists' quarters were in the way.

I mean—not only were the Cirinists' quarters in the way (the top of the stairs wasn't visible from the front of the barge), but…how was *any*thing supposed to be visible "just over Cerebus's left shoulder"? He was leaning against the mast, and the barge's hold, directly behind, was the same height he was. Even leaving aside the fact that the "handrail"—when I checked—turned out to be a rope and not a chain…

I did the only sensible thing under the circumstances.

I ignored the art direction.

I changed the three-panel sequence so that the "camera" started with a head-on shot of Cerebus in the first panel and then moved *up* the mast in the second panel—"discovering" Jaka—and moving a little closer to her position in the third panel.

I wrote a note to Ger at the top of the page:

So much for a shooting script—*nothing* is visible the way I described it. The camera will just have to move *up* the mast and aft over the course of the top three panels. Jaka is still standing at the top of the stairs. There's not much point in my trying to put her in first, so I'll wait until you have the background [*pencilled*] in to do so.

As an afterthought, I did a reduced photocopy of my "roughed in" first three panels with the note to Ger at the top and taped it into my notebook—OVER the reduced photocopy of page 330's script.

And that was the last time I even *read* the art direction.

WRITERS VS. ARTISTS

It seemed to me that I might've, coincidentally, happened onto a contribution to the second level of Mark Evanier's columns—"writers vs. artists"—having just experienced what would seem to be the core of the conflict because the writer and artist (one of the artists, anyway) of *Cerebus* share accommodations inside the same guy.

The writer is really "up against it" when it comes to keeping himself from going insane, because of the stultifying nature of typing a comic-book script. There is a tendency to overwrite art descriptions—both describing what is depicted too thoroughly and occasionally too "literarily" for the same reason that the human mind tends to hallucinate when it is left alone in the dark for too long. That's a bit exaggerated, but what I mean is that the physical act of typing a script is so boring and mechanical that a creative mind tends to seize on something—ANYthing—else to alleviate that state of boredom. There is also the writerly concern that the story won't come out "right," or the chances of the story coming out "wrong" can be diminished by thoroughly describing each little detail and nuance of each and every corner of each and every panel.

When I started drawing pages 329 and 330, I was very much aware of this: aware of it as the *Cerebus* artist charged with the responsibility of "not screwing up" the *Cerebus* writer's script. Larger ambition than that, I wanted—if for no other reason than for the sake of the one-time experiment and experience—to put down the finished art for the last sixty pages, *exactly* as the writer had pictured it. Because the writer *had* pictured it very, very specifically, and as the artist I knew exactly how he had pictured it (because we're both, you know, *in here*).

It just wasn't possible. What I found was that the writer pictured very, very specific comic-book panels and comic-book pages. They were *very* specific. They were also very "no good." Serviceable, but bland. And the writer knew that. That was why I didn't experience any inward conflict when I—very abruptly—decided not to read the art directions anymore. The writer recognized that the process which took place was the same process that *always* takes place. The artist takes over and changes what he needs to change in what the writer has envisioned—otherwise the *artist* would probably go insane, transcribing the writer's bland but serviceable layouts, page after page after page.

Taking the example of the three-panel sequence I just described (the last point where I tried to transcribe the writer's panel description as closely as possible, modifying it around the fundamental problems instead of dispensing with it completely): If, as the writer, I had limited my description of the sequence to factual content, leaving the "visual variables" more open, I would have produced a more effective script, a better assist to the artist (i.e., "multi-panel sequence, starting with CEREBUS sprawled on the forward hatch, shivering, drunk, and clutching his bottle of gin, and finishing with JAKA at the top of the stairs leading to the rearmost deck, looking rather vaguely and wistfully toward the front of the barge"). Right away, as an artist I have a lot more options as to how to depict the sequence. In fact, even as I write the mere factual description—where the characters are, what attitude/mood they are in, the fact that it is a multi-panel sequence—I see the scene differently. Cerebus, small and shivering in the left-hand panel, Jaka small and at the top of the stairs in the right-hand panel, the sequence being, overall, one large picture of the barge, the middle panel (panels?) separating Cerebus from Jaka, and the "pan" across the cold, nighttime waves washing along the barge's hull emphasizing the chill between them. That is, "visible over his left shoulder" and other descriptions of *relative* placements should probably have been avoided—perhaps even the "starting with CEREBUS…finishing with JAKA" which precludes "starting with JAKA…finishing with CEREBUS"—the complete opposite as "camera angles" go, but just as valid in communicating the factual content. By trying to be more helpful to the artist by thoroughly describing the panels, the writer actually tends—or can tend to—make the artist's job more difficult by prejudicing the artist in favour of seeing a panel or a sequence in a specific way which might not suit the best interests of the story.

[As I've pointed out on more than one occasion—but never in print—I think that that's one of the great contributions that Alan Moore made to comic-book scriptwriting, apart from writing much, much better than average comic-book stories. He is always careful to mention in his art directions that they are just suggestions and that the artist is free to use or not use as much or as little of it as he or she cares to. A self-confessed long-winded bastard, I imagine that his notoriously elaborate descriptions might well have originated as a way of diminishing the inherently stultifying nature of scriptwriting, making *more* of the act of scriptwriting creative and creatively satisfying and less of it mechanical and boring—said motivation being, perhaps, completely unconscious on his part. Eddie Campbell's policy of having his wife Anne (hi, Anne!) go through Alan's *From Hell* scripts as they came in, underlining only those passages in the art description which described specific people and objects which were needed to be depicted in the panel, likewise might have recognized the tendency of Alan's elaborate descriptions to prejudice his—Eddie's—visualization of the page ahead of time or to overwhelm his storytelling abilities with an excess of extraneous detail. Telling an artist that he is free to ignore a vivid Alan Moore panel description being akin to telling someone that he is welcome to *not* think about a stadium-sized pink elephant

covered in hot fudge if he would *prefer* not to.]

There are gray areas and fuzzy borderlands, I decided, between the writer letting go of the script and the artist beginning to interpret it. While it is one thing to advocate restricting art descriptions to factual content, there are gray areas which apply to factual content as well. Mood being a good example, either as a description of weather or a character's state of emotion or mind in a given panel:

> Jaka (happy): Just like you said.
> Jaka (rueful): Just like you said.

Two very different facial expressions and postures being required. The burden is on the artist's shoulders to interpret not just the adjective but the *degree* of the adjective in the picture. Near the end of my script for *Spawn* 10, I described Cerebus in one of the panels as "looking bored." When Todd faxed me his pencils for the page, Cerebus, in that panel, was sitting on the ground, his head in his hands and his arms balanced on his knees. I faxed back a sketch of Cerebus scratching his armpit, his eyes half-lidded. It's only possible to do that when the writer happens also to be an artist (not to mention being the creator of the character being depicted. I never even looked at the Spawn faces and figures—let alone suggested changes). The only difference between Todd's interpretation of "bored" and mine was of degree.

[Of course, just to undermine my own argument about elaborate art directions tending to inhibit an artist when he is conceiving the page, I have always liked the story about Denny O'Neil being so overwhelmed by Neal Adams' ability to get onto the pages of their collaborations exactly what O'Neil had described (no matter how complicated) that —in one of the *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* scripts, O'Neil wrote in the art directions for one panel: "In the foreground two rhinos are charging toward the reader"—at a point in the story that takes place in someone's apartment. Just to—you know—see what Adams would do. It's a great panel with all of the action taking place in the background. The foreground is a desk with a desk set on it. In between the two pens is a sculpture of two charging rhinos.]

Anyway, not being someone whose opinion is especially welcome in "industry" debates, I thought I would throw all of this in, for what it is worth to the individual writer, writer-artist, and/or artist. And as something of a navel-gazing traffic accident for the casual reader.

Page 332 - Mindful of the "line of sight" problems between the forward hatch and the top of the stairs, I depicted F. Stop Kennedy up on the point of his toes to observe Jaka as she arrives adjacent to Cerebus's position.

Pages 334-337 - Originally, I envisioned F. Stop Kennedy continuing to observe Jaka and Cerebus's confrontation as he fantasizes about the course of their conversation. That seemed like a long time for a hung-over, middle-aged writer to stay up on tip-toe, so (I rationalized), he continues to stare in the general direction of the front of the barge, but he is completely lost in his daydream.

Page 338 - Okay, then (smart guy). If that's true, then how does F. Stop Kennedy "see" Jaka and Cerebus coming back to their stateroom, when he is bent forward enjoying his imaginary kiss?

Well, I was counting on the fact that not too many of you would go to the trouble of building your own model of the barge so you could see that it wasn't possible.

Trust me. If he were so inclined, after *Cerebus* is completed, Ger could write his own thick volume of annotations entitled *Why You Wouldn't See That From There and How I Got Around It*, featuring the door to Pud's tavern in *Jaka's Story* switching several times from opening to the right to opening to the left and back again.

Fortunately, Ger is far more interested in spending time on his sailboat when we're done, or I would really look like a fool.

Page 341 - In portraying the Cirinists, I try to be very careful to limit myself to straight line extrapolations from where our civilization used to be to where it is now and extending the straight line into the future. It is not parody or caricature to me; it is pure extrapolation.

Here I am taking how our civilization used to be—what went on between a man and his wife was the business of the man and his wife and no one else—plotting a straight line from there to our own age of shelters for abused women and restraining orders against husbands and ex-husbands—and seeing where this is likely to lead as women increase their participation in the judicial and legislative branches of our society. It is very difficult for unthinking emotion-based beings to see this as anything but Dave Sim Advocates Spousal Abuse, which is, to me, the far more genuinely terrifying threat to society, that such beings who are unable to differentiate between extrapolation and advocacy are allowed to occupy positions of authority. Since thinking beings, I'm sure, *will* understand the extrapolation that I am portraying here, I will address myself to the unthinking emotion-based beings instead:

I do not advocate spousal abuse. I have never hit a woman myself, although I have been hit *by* them. If a boyfriend or a married man asks me (as some have), I always tell them the same thing. All you can do is say "yes, dear" until you say "goodbye." Reason has no chance in any conflict with emotion, and my not inextensive experience with women has shown me that "letting the matter drop," "let's not go there," and "I think we have to stop talking about this now" are stopgap measures and Band-Aid solutions. "Can we put this behind us now?" was one that I thought was pretty cute, as well. My last time out, I was tempted toward the end to say, "Shit—everything *else* is back there. You think there's

any room left?"

I can understand the need for shelters for *physically* abused women. I do not agree with expanding the definition of abuse to include things like shouting or profanity. I can understand the need for restraining orders against abusive husbands and ex-husbands—*physically* abusive or those who *threaten* physical abuse. Likewise with stalking, in person, by phone. All of that. No problem.

But it does concern me that women think that these measures are inadequate. That they think it should be made easier to have a boyfriend or a husband arrested. One quick phone call. Slap a restraining order on him from the comfort of your home or office with rubber-stamp approval guaranteed.

This is the centerpiece of my extrapolation.

A straight line from a man and wife being a completely-behind-closed-doors-inviolate-two-person-confederation-with-liberty-and-justice-for-all to the introduction of judicial and legislative measures which *mandate* the intrusion of the police and the courts into that previously inviolate two-person confederation and which see the measures which currently exist to be inadequate—such a straight line leads directly, in my view, to fascism, totalitarianism, bad, no-good, icky, really not nice, who broke the nice dolly? etc., etc.

Capice?

Yeah, you bitch. *Capice*?

Oh, look at the pretty Nazi all mad.

See, guys?

Do you understand now?

Page 344 - Fitzgerald alluded often in his writing to his rich, Walter Mitty-like fantasy existence and the vivid interior movies he played and replayed in his mind to lull himself to sleep at night—F. Scott Fitzgerald, the heroic captain of the Princeton football team, single-handedly scoring the winning touchdown in the waning seconds of the game. F. Scott Fitzgerald, the war hero, single-handedly leading a charge against the enemy, which turns the tide of battle. I would imagine all of these had ticker-tape parades and medals and whatnot attached to them.

One of the more striking examples of this takes place in *The Beautiful and the Damned* (pp. 225-226):

> The day passed slowly. Anthony, riding in a taxi to his broker's to borrow money on a bond, found that he had only two dollars in his pocket. The fare would cost all of that, but he felt that on this particular afternoon he could not have endured the subway. When the taxi metre reached his limit he must get out and walk.
>
> With this his mind drifted off into one of its characteristic day-dreams… In this dream he discovered that the metre was going too fast—the driver had dishonestly adjusted it. Calmly he reached his destination and then nonchalantly handed the man what he justly owed him.

Well within the boundaries of conventional daydreaming, the endless sorting through of "what ifs" to which every human mind is susceptible.

But then there's this whiplash assertion, without transition or preamble:

> The man showed fight, but almost before his hands were up Anthony had knocked him down with one terrific blow. And when he rose Anthony quickly side-stepped and floored him definitely with a crack in the temple.

I mean, doesn't it seem to you as if there are a couple of lines of dialogue missing here? "Hey, buddy, this ain't enough," and "Not enough, you scoundrel? I'll show you 'not enough.'" Almost as if Fitzgerald can't wait through two lines of dialogue to get to the "good stuff."

This was one of the excerpts I pulled out right away.

Page 347 - From F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Notebooks*. This would seem to encapsulate his own most frequent view of his "Life with Zelda," about which he was largely fatalistic and which he seemed to see as predestined.

Page 348 - Also from *Notebooks*, the other side of F. Scott Fitzgerald. There are few examples of these sentiments in Fitzgerald's writings after 1924 or so. The one I like the best is from *Tender is the Night*, as Dr. Diver converses with "his most interesting case," an unnamed female patient who is one of the many Zelda stand-ins in the novel:

> "But it's only by meeting the problems of every day, no matter how trifling and boring they seem, that you can make things drop back into place again. After that—perhaps you'll be able again to examine——"
>
> He had slowed up to avoid the inevitable end of his thought: "—the frontiers of consciousness." The frontiers that artists must explore were not for her, ever. She was fine-spun, inbred—eventually she might find rest in some quiet mysticism. Exploration was for those with a measure of peasant blood, those with big thighs and thick ankles who could take punishment as they took bread and salt, on every inch of flesh and spirit.
>
> —Not for you, he almost said. It's too tough a game for you.

A sentiment worthy of Norman Mailer (or at least Hemingway).

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